

THE PARENTS' REVIEW

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE
FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS.

Vol. XXIII. No. 11.]

[NOVEMBER, 1912.]

THREE EDUCATIONAL IDYLLS.

By C. M. Mason.

WE are waking up to the artistic delight and beauty of Education, and begin to see it as it is, a fine art, and the most delicate and remunerative of the arts. ^{Some years ago} Within the last year, we ~~have~~ had three educational idylls displayed to us, and people ^{were} ~~have been~~ arrested by each in turn because life offers nothing more exquisite for our observation than a child who is expanding duly under the process to which we give the clumsy name of education. *Edmund*

First, Mr. Holmes introduced us to "Egeria" and her school of young peasants in Sussex. Now, labourers in Sussex are not conspicuous for their intelligence, and to find ~~their~~ ^{here} children capable of writing and acting scenes from the Waverley Novels, for example, of finding for themselves by research in their school library the appropriate dresses for given periods and personages must have made the lady we know as Egeria feel "like some watcher of the skies ^{u/ /"} When a new planet swims into his ken." *etc*

No wonder the mistake arose of supposing that she had found out the right medium, or method, of education; children must be fed upon jam, she would say; and she taught the multiplication table and the facts of geography by the "dramatic method!" Now, jam is enticing, but it is upon bread and butter and beef that children make muscle, and "dramatic" teaching, charming ^{and wholesome} on occasions, is not to be depended upon for solid results. Egeria's discovery was something of far more importance than a mere method of instruction; she, as well as some others, has discovered the infinite educability of any child; and, that knowledge is the mind-stuff on which children develop, the human knowledge ^e known as Letters.

Whoever interprets this experiment as a sanction for a "dramatic method" of teaching, misses its meaning and is

too likely to produce fantastic ignorance rather than knowledge ; but what good cheer this message from the hills brings to those who can read it, how good to know that the minds of children are exceedingly accessible to knowledge !

Another equally impressive and picturesque idyll reaches us from Italy. We all know the story : Dottoressa Maria Montessori had her attention called to the subject of education some years ago when she was assistant doctor at the Psychiatric Clinic of the University of Rome ; there she became interested in idiot and feeble-minded children, and by degrees worked out a system of education for these somewhat on the lines of Séguin whose remarkable work in America opened the way to the education of defective children. *in*

By degrees, it occurred to the Signora that the methods which answered with defectives, should be successful with normal children ; and, seven years ago, she was empowered to organize an infant school in the model tenements of the Roman Association for Good Building, in San Lorenzo, in fact, *in* a bad slum quarter of Rome. *rat*

Here we get the idyll that I have spoken of ; a gracious Madonna with the children of the very poor gathered about her in the heart of their own home quarter, raised to her level through her gentleness and wisdom, and in their turn, raising their families, for gentleness is very catching. The method ~~is~~ *was* intended for children of from three to six, but she ~~hopes to~~ *has* carry ^{so far} it further ~~and~~ to introduce it into schools for children of all ages. *now*

The children are delightfully good, and very independent, for one of Dr. Montessori's sound principles is that the teacher must take a back place. What is to be done the children do, under the minimum of instruction. But already we discern the little rift within the lute, for the teacher is to be engaged in observing while the children work, the system being a system of *scientific pedagogy*. I shall speak of this matter more in detail later.

The occupations or lessons of the children consist largely in buttoning and unbuttoning, lacing and unlacing, tying and untying, upon frames designed to assist them in the art of fastening their own clothes. There is too, a great deal of work in what used to be called "form" and "colour," for the matching of colours and forms has long been familiar in kindergarten

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schools. But Dr. Montessori has invented a new way of handling geometric forms which would appear to have surprising results. In a word the children seem to learn to read and write by touch without ever having had a lesson,—that is, a direct lesson; a child surprises and delights himself by being able to write sentences and even a letter on the blackboard, in a quite clear hand-writing and with correct spelling. This really is the bait that catches the gudgeon. Everybody knows that it is a labour for a child to learn to read and write; some children learn nobody knows how, and can do both quite well before they are five years old; but, usually, children do not read and write until they are eight. No wonder that India, China, Mexico, Korea, Switzerland, the United States, are about to ~~establish~~ schools to be taught upon this magical system. Nor is England behind. We in England have ~~our~~ ^{already} Montessori society, and ~~are sending ladies to Rome to be~~ ^{or have} ~~qualified as teachers.~~ ^{established} Eureka, we are inclined to cry—"Education" is discovered at last!

But while we cherish generous appreciation of this lady with the lamp, and of the excellence of her work, it behoves us to look closely into a discovery which may prove disastrous to mankind in proportion as it is attractive. How is this amazing feat of reading and writing accomplished? Simply by touch. The children pass their fore-finger round the contours of various geometric forms, and, later, round those of letters, continually, we gather, round a single form or letter; for how many minutes at a time we are not told; later, they perform these motions with little sticks, and then, presto, they can write!

It is astonishing that so simple a process should issue in such considerable results. But is it possible that, after all, the children pay too dear for the whistle? I suppose we could answer this question best by spending some time daily in tracing rather minute forms with the two first fingers; I think we should find the exercise dead dull, until, presently, it became curiously soothing; that is, until a certain hypnotic effect set in. I think the silences, the sudden hush, the tip-toe movements, the dottoressa's commanding personality, are likely to have this same hypnotic effect; and the pictured children in "The Montessori Method" appear to be rather wanting in vivacity. They are very gentle and graceful, but have something of the aloof look proper to persons under

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the question arises whether children who learn under the Montessori system are better than those who learn under the ordinary system?

undue influence; and this is especially remarkable in the American children shown in an interesting American appreciation of the method. ~~Now any approach to the hypnotic state implies brain exhaustion, and children whose lessons are conducted, even partially, under this influence will doubtless have to pay their arrears in adult life; they may possibly become the parents of defective children.~~

I think, too, that the excessive cultivation of the senses is not without its risks. The child who can arrange in due order the shades of colour exhibited in sixty-four silk "tablets" is exhausting in infancy one of the increasing pleasures of life, and is likely to suffer from an undue and purely mechanical strain upon his attention. Is it safe either to train little fingers too early in continuous buttoning, hooking, tying? In every nursery and every home the little one is proudly but casually initiated in these mysteries; this is Nature's way—and I believe it to be the best. For the muscles as we know are controlled by nerves, and the nervous strain of performing a difficult mechanical act under a sort of moral compulsion is likely to tell in later school-days and to increase the number of neurotic, "jumpy" children.

Perhaps,

There are curious gaps in the "Montessori Method." We hear of no "Hi-diddle-diddle" songs, no holy hymns, no Bible tales, no fairy tales, no tales of beasts, no tales of heroes, never a tale at all in fact, and we wonder why. But we must not forget that this new system is one of *scientific* pedagogy and all these things are out of the domain of science. Love creeps in unawares, but that is because Dr. Montessori is better than her method, and we have the vision of the gracious lady with the little ones clinging to her skirts. It is in fact the human element, hardly recognized by the founder herself, which saves the situation. The dottoressa is quite consistent. Scientific pedagogy is what she proposes to herself, and having a logical mind she perceives that science can deal only with things seen, things demonstrable, to be touched, tasted, handled. So while her own humanity sheds grace and courtesy over the little school the actual teaching of the children appears to be confined to the sort of mechanical exercises I have indicated. Influence does the rest, the influence of mind and heart escaping from a great soul. Nevertheless, I think the children are

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defrauded; the intention is to develop the "whole" nature of the child, but the hungry mind is left out of consideration.

We see a great deal with which we are familiar in the Froebel teaching, but the Head declines Froebel games and occupations as being rather frivolous and leading to nothing; again, we see the influence of Rousseau in a system which is occupied with things, not words; but Dr. Montessori's real parentage must be sought in our own eighteenth century school of Educationalists; just so would Maria Edgeworth have conducted a little school; just so curiously serious and responsible would she have made the little people in her charge. Visitors to the *Casa* pronounce that the children are "little men," that they are as "judges seated in deliberation." Just so would Maria Edgeworth have had children appear and behave; and she also, being a woman of powerful nature, would have succeeded in producing little people of admirable behaviour without effort.

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"The problem of religious education, the importance of which we do not fully realize, should also be solved by positive pedagogy. If religion is born with civilization, its roots must lie deep in human nature. We have had most beautiful proof of an instinctive love of knowledge in the child, who has too often been misjudged in that he has been considered addicted to meaningless play, and games void of thought. The child who left the game in his eagerness for knowledge, has revealed himself as a true son of that humanity which has been throughout centuries the creator of scientific and civil progress. We have belittled the son of man by giving him foolish and degrading toys, a world of idleness where he is suffocated by a badly conceived discipline. Now in his liberty, the child should show us, as well, whether man is by nature a religious creature."

I quote this passage to show that Dr. Montessori does not ignore the question of the religious teaching of children—but rather postpones it in the hope that scientific pedagogy may in time furnish suggestions as to matter and method!

The third idyll I have in view is more difficult to speak of because it is more personal. This, too, had a romantic setting to which it was greatly indebted, but in any setting I think the children would have been lovely. I refer to the meeting of the Parents' Union School at Winchester, in the past summer. *lin*
They came in twos and threes from Ireland, from Scotland, *1912*

Children

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from the far counties of England as well as from the Home Counties. Contingents came from schools which are doing the same work. They ranged in age from six to eighteen, and they had never met, though for years, perhaps, they had been doing the same work in their several homes and schools, according to age and class. The children took Winchester by storm. They did not swarm over the fine Guildhall, because so splendidly was the whole thing organized (by the Hon. Mrs. Franklin and Miss Parish, especially), that each child was presented with a card showing him in which room he was to be, at what hour on each of the four days. Now, the children are in the habit of reading and following instructions, a habit learned in carrying out the schemes of work and the examination papers which reach them every term. These school-fellows had never met in numbers before, but *l'esprit de corps* required no cultivation, it was there; every child found his or her own class in the appointed place, and set to work at the usual lessons under a strange teacher with great simplicity and earnestness. They sang together, because they had all learned the same songs at home, and the same hymns, which the Dean benevolently allowed them to sing in the Cathedral where he gave them a delightful address. A newspaper reporter records how he heard one little fellow say, "I'll show you the way, we've made a plan, you know!"

The children were quite independent and quite docile and gentle; a member of the medical profession remarked on their freedom from such neurotic symptoms as fidgetiness, inattention, gazing about, restlessness, excitement. There was no display; the children had met because the school had, so to speak, come of age, and it seemed to be an occasion for as many to meet as should find it convenient to do so. Some two hundred and fifty appeared, and their mothers and governesses who accompanied them made up a company of six hundred. The children moved among this large gathering of people with perfect simplicity and sweetness, exhibiting charming manners (perhaps because, as the newspapers remarked, they belonged to the upper, and upper-middle classes, but I think that was not the only reason). No attempt was made to amuse them and no opportunity was given for display; even in the great Historical Pageant of the Ages, as these are connected with Winchester, no one was

a few fathers

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* (So accurately & artistically prepared by Miss
Clementine Parsons)

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remarkable because everyone was remarkable. There was practically no discipline—because every child knew what was to be done and did it. This, too, was an educational idyll, which, although I had not the happiness to see it, I was able to realize from many pages of description.

Now what was the real meaning of this little episode, and, if the children were exceptional, why were they so? I think because they are being educated in a school where certain very definite principles are being carried out. As in Dr. Montessori's *Casa*, the teachers keep themselves in the background. The business of every day is not for the teachers to teach, but for the children to learn; when the children are at work, she works too; if they are painting a given object, she paints it, giving no more than the little friendly monitions called for when they go wrong. The secret of it all is that the children are intensely interested in knowledge, in a pretty wide range of knowledge; and that they get this knowledge out of books, not often books specially prepared for children. No effort is necessary to keep their attention by means of pleasing lessons; they attend for two reasons; first, because they care to know, and secondly, because they must know, the lesson in hand. It is not often necessary to enforce this "must"; it is in the air; there is the given work to be done in the given time, with the examination ahead at the end of the term. There are no prizes or place takings in the school; no honours lists, no marks to be gained or lost—for the children take pleasure in the work and in the examination to follow; for this] no revision of passages out of the considerable number of books used in the term is usual. The teacher ascertains that they know each lesson or chapter, and it remains with them. They answer questions on the term's reading with much fluency and accuracy. ~~I need not say more about this Winchester gathering because it is possible that the readers of the *Parents' Review* are a little tired of the subject; at any rate it is fresh in our memories.~~ What I should like to urge, though I do so with diffidence, is, that a great deal lies behind what was carried through with so much simplicity and naturalness.

Professor Holmes, of Harvard University, in his introduction to what in the English edition is called "The Montessori Method" says, "It is wholly within the bounds of safe judgment to call Dr. Montessori's work remarkable, novel, and important."

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It is remarkable, if for no other reason, because it represents the constructive effort of a woman. We have no other example of an educational system—original at least in its systematic wholeness and in its practical application—worked out and inaugurated by the feminine mind and hand. It is remarkable, also, because it springs from a combination of womanly sympathy and intuition, broad social out-look, scientific training, intensive and long-continued study of educational problems, and to crown all, varied and unusual experience as a teacher and educational leader." *is it possible*

I have lately undergone half playful chiding from one who has earned some little right to chide because she gives much of her life to the spreading of those principles of education for which the P.N.E.U. stands. I speak, of course, of our Hon. Org. Secretary. I lamented dolorously to her that the members of the Parents' Union hardly seemed to realize that we stand for the most advanced, and, I suppose, the final movement in educational philosophy. Her reply was, that it was my fault; that I have hidden behind such phrases as "P.N.E.U. thought," which people who belong to the Union and are not aware of any particular line of thought, take for a *façon de parler*. This is why people do not realize how much there is before them to examine, receive, carry out and propagate. *Mea culpa*; I believe my friendly Mentor is right, and that it is my sole fault if we are not a Society passionately devoted to a great cause, the greatest cause in the world. *new & unknown mother's movement*

If one discovers, it is because the thing is there; there is no credit in making a discovery; gravitation was there for Sir Isaac Newton, the possibility of communication without visible medium, for Signor Marconi; in like manner, educational principles are present in human nature itself and only wait to be discerned, discovered. *have been and are still to be*

For ~~forty~~ years I have laboured to establish a working and philosophic theory of education, and, I think, with success. It has been said that "The best idea which we can form of absolute truth is that it is able to meet every condition by which it can be tested." Now, the truth which I have formulated,* is, I think, able to meet every such condition. *perhaps*

* In some five volumes, of which, had they the good fortune to have been written by someone else, I should be able to say, read them through every year or two, so that the truths they embody may become a usual and natural part of your thinking.

Heppan Paul & Co.

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It is just possible that these generous words may apply in another connection.

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In Dr. Montessori's work we come by chance upon a set of conditions which offers such a test. An able writer in the *Contemporary Review*, for September, remarks that this method is valuable, not for its results, but for "the principles of life" it exhibits. That is, no doubt, the true test of all educational theory; but sympathetic as one necessarily is, the question occurs, is it principles of life or principles of death that are to be seen at work in the *Casa dei Bambini*? ed
in truth

~~We believe (pace to our Hon. Org. Secretary, it is hard to say 'I' after thirty years practice in saying 'we')~~ We believe that a child is born a person; the scientific pedagogist believes that a person is a product. We think ~~he~~ is a whole person, body and spirit (including mind, heart, soul, will, conscience, whatever we include in the immaterial as well as the material properties of a person): his business is to increase in wisdom and stature; he grows by eating, sleeping, playing, running, jumping, skipping, shouting, in the free air as much as possible. He grows in wisdom, too, that is, ~~as we say~~ ^{to employ} in the science of relations; after a year or ^{the whole} so, he no longer wants to hold the moon in his pinafore, ^{we use} he has learned something of the relation of distance, he knows far and near; he does not put his finger in the fire, nor sit like that delightful yellow-headed boy on the duck pond, because he has increased in wisdom and knows hot and cold, solid and liquid. Can we realize what it is to become acquainted with a world and its ways? To adapt yourself to all the surprising properties of matter, to turn a corner, climb a stair? To learn to speak a language, too, (he can learn two or three at the same time), or rather, to learn language, and form unused organs to the production of strange vocables, to learn arts far beyond those of skating, skying, tennis playing, watch-making, in difficulty, for these are all developments of the initial arts of walking, running, lifting, carrying, throwing, which baby acquires with marvellous assiduity in his first two or three years of life. Consider, too, the infinite number of things he learns to know and to name, how amusingly happy he is in finding what the French call the just word, how careful and beautiful his articulation is unless he has bad models. Let us think again how the little person loves and how he trusts, how tender his conscience is, how loyal his obedience, how insatiate is his craving for knowledge about all he sees, and we

begin to understand what is meant by a child being a person ; and to realize that he wants space and air and liberty in which to develop all that he is. We shudder to see him confined for all those long hours of the day (from nine till five !), a specimen in a case, under observation, subject to experiments, even the kindest and wisest.

I sympathize with Dr. Montessori's strong ~~sense~~ *conviction* that children should have liberty, but the liberty of children who are being carefully trained within the limits of four walls and a little court is not enough ; perhaps it is safe to say that the unregarded liberty of the kerb-stone and door-step is more proper for little persons who have so very much to do on their own account both with mind and body, that is more important than the best ordered scientific work within four walls : the rough and tumble of cottage or nursery life is proper to the children, and gives Nature the opportunities she requires for their development ; our part is unobtrusive carer for the instruction the children ask for and no more. It will be urged that children in a poor quarter must be safe-guarded from the evil in the streets ; they are safe-guarded, as Wordsworth, Mr. Barrie, many hospital nurses know ; is it that the angels hold them up by their skirts as in Richter's quaint pictures ?

We may not impose any great strain on the attention of young children. We must eschew geometric forms and squares of colour in favour of the things lovely which Nature provides ; we must give them the shelter of love and not hurry them into too early independence. Our work is chiefly negative with little children ; we must keep the divine law within our hearts and see to it that we do not despise, hinder or offend them. In obedience to this law, we teach them to do as they are bid, and train them in habits of decency and propriety.

For the rest, we begin to perceive that it is only in a little child we get any measure of the illimitable mind and heart of man. Of course, in right of his mind and heart, the little child must have Bible tales, fairy tales and hero tales, picture and song, and how dreary is that Casa in San Lorenzo where are none of these things.

We begin to understand the amazing performances in reading and writing just as we understand little John Stuart Mill's great doings in Greek ; there is nothing else to do and think about, and the children, who are persons endowed with minds,

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clamour to be taught to read and write. We can do it with our children if we like, but it must be at the like cost, the exclusion of the intellectual and imaginative interests and joys proper to children, the devotion of dreary hours every day to these *dead* pursuits. No, let us be content to be the handmaids of Nature for the first five or six years, remembering that enormous as are the tasks she sets the children, she guides them into the performance of each so that it is done with unfailing delight; for gaiety, delight, mirth, belong to her method. If a child chooses to read and write before he is six, let him, but do not make him; and when he does begin, there is no occasion to hurry; let him have a couple of years for the task. At six his school-life, his lessons, should begin, and there is so much to be done during the first two years of a *person's* school-life that he will suffer if too much attention be given to these two necessary arts; he already works on a wide curriculum.

To prick so fair and iridescent an educational bubble even were it with Ithuriel's spear is a thankless task. It has not been possible in a short ~~paper~~ ^{volume} to do justice to the charm of that Roman *Casa*; but I think the initial idea is a mistaken one; to apply to normal children the methods that answer with defective children is an injustice to the former, however successful the methods may prove. ~~I~~ ^{we} have found on the contrary in the ~~very few~~ ^{few} cases where the attempt has been made, that defective children respond to the intellectual appeal and overtake their contemporaries.

"It is our system that counts," says Emerson, "not the single word or unsupported action"; and I would pray ~~all members of the P.N.E.U.~~ ^{the} to make a thoughtful, earnest and continuous study of a system which meets the perplexities and the aspirations of our age, and which should issue in a generation of men and women, who shall be indeed, beings of large discourse, looking before and after.

~~We of the P.N.E.U.~~ ^{to} if we be ~~mind~~ ^{to} ~~to~~ ^{to} advance in our thousands with one heart and one purpose, ~~are strong enough~~ ^{may} to bring about a Twentieth Century Renaissance, more glorious and permanent than that of the Middle Age, because its ultimate source shall be a profound Christianity, in lieu of the poisoned springs of Paganism. We have the ~~one~~ ^{one} thing to offer which the whole world wants, an ~~absolutely~~ ^{absolutely} effective system of education covering the whole nature of a child, the whole life of man.

Secret

The

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Education in the 20th Century (1955)

Our object is not merely to teach parents, but schoolmasters and mistresses, nurses and governesses are all included. All these, as well as the parents themselves, we desire to bring together, and that is why I have spoken of the great necessity of a close co-operation between school and home.

Now, here in this educational centre, we are meeting under auspices, which I think, are exceptional. We have had extended to us the sympathy and support of the Bristol University and Clifton College. You will see how many addresses are being given by schoolmasters, and how closely connected with our programme are these two great educational centres. That is enough, I think, to clear us of any charge of amateurism. We are not a small Society of faddists, who desire to lecture to parents. We are a Society that has already had its majority and is able to do some service in bringing home and school together, in order that that interest in education which is so alive to-day may be put to the best possible use.

After the inaugural speeches the delegates were entertained at tea by the Bristol Committee.

8.30 p.m. GRAMMAR SCHOOL, CLIFTON, by kind invitation of the Council and the Head Master (Cyril Norwood, Esq.)

The Right. Hon. the EARL OF LYTTON in the chair.

In the evening a meeting was held at the Grammar School, by invitation of the Council and the Headmaster, Mr. Cyril Norwood, when a lecture was given by Dr. Greville MacDonald on "The Child's Inheritance." The chair was taken by the Earl of Lytton, and there was a large attendance.

The Hon. MRS. FRANKLIN, the Hon. Organizing Secretary, reported the receipt of a message conveying good wishes to the Conference from the founder of the Union, Miss Charlotte Mason, who wrote from Ambleside, saying: "I think we all feel that Mr. John Burns gave the other day a faithful diagnosis of a very general ailment, when he said, 'The tendency of the present day in all modern movements is for great crowds to be brought together to see other people play, and that is extending, not only to play, but to other fields of life.' 'In a word,' said Mr. Burns, 'we now cry in companies, smile in battalions, sport in divisions, make holiday in armies, and are married in mobs. The spirit of the horde is being

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developed, and whether it is in exhibitions, sports, games, or legislation, the individual is becoming less and less important, and the mob more and more so. That is a dangerous tendency, and one which we must all do our best to resist.' This parasitic habit of hanging on to a crowd offers indications important to us who are concerned with education. Nobody finds pleasure in the crowd—then why go in mobs? Because something has been left out of our composition which should enable us to stand alone, and, therefore, we put out tendrils towards any promise of pleasure, or interest, that a crowd offers. We of the Parents' Union believe that education should supply that missing quality which makes a parasitic existence unnecessary and distasteful. Children should be brought up not merely to get a living and not merely to be good citizens—(I will not say not merely to be good Christians for the Christian life is an all-embracing circle and includes the development of that *joie de vivre* which is a legitimate aim in education). Children should be educated, among other things, for their own uses. They should know how to fasten on matters of joy and interest; they should reach a manhood or womanhood which does not know an hour of dullness and dreariness (sorrow and anxiety are inevitable); and, for this reason, their education should be in some measure encyclopædic. They should be brought into touch with all the great subjects of human interest—books, pictures, science, music, nature, the service of men and, above all, the service of God. It will be said that there is nothing new in this; it has long been felt that children should have delightful lessons, and, in these days, they get them in every school, and, indeed, have done so for the last twenty or thirty years. How is it then that people are incapable of finding each his own delight and go in crowds in the hope that at least one weary hour may be got over? Probably because the teacher's efforts have ended in amusing and delighting the children through their school-years and leaving them victims of *ennui* until someone else shall amuse them with talk or spectacle. That is why we of the Parents' Union aim at throwing the children upon their own resources from the very first, letting them make what they can of book or picture, flower or bird; giving them knowledge as they need it, but being careful *not* to supply the interest but only the knowledge. Children have in them-

selves an inexhaustible stock of interest. What they want is that the best things and the best books, the worthy endeavours, should be put in their way, and that they should be encouraged by quite a little guidance and sympathy to get out of these the intellectual and moral sustenance of which they are in real need. We hope to send forth young people for whom the days are not long enough to contain all the engrossing work and delightful interests which life affords; who will find life fuller and richer as the days go on, and who will be ready to give and glad to distribute of all that wealth of interests which increases to them year by year. We do not wish to be the dispensers of joy to children. We believe that a 'wise passiveness' should characterize us as parents and teachers; but we must put children in the way of getting that which they require, so that not of them shall it be written—

'An idle poet, now and then,
Looks round about him, but, for all the rest,
The world, unfathomably fair,
Is duller than a witling's jest.'

"It is our faith that a life filled with worthy interests should help our young people to—

'Keep clean, bear fruit, earn life, and watch
Till the white-winged Reapers come.' "

~~THE CHAIRMAN, in introducing the lecturer, said that the subject of Dr. MacDonald's address was one which covered the whole train of thought that they were trying to develop in the Conference this year. He referred to the appropriateness of the Shelley quotation which headed their programme, "I love all that thou lovest, spirit of delight," and he pointed out that "the spirit of delight" was the feature they desired to preserve throughout the educational period. Incidentally, he referred to the joy that was to be found in knowledge, in books, in work, and in study. He spoke of the child's inheritance, which included in the first instance the right of the child to perfect equipment of mind and body, and which included, secondly, a sound and complete training in the use which might be made of that equipment and the duty of those who undertook the education, whether parents or teachers. Their business in either capacity was to combine to form one fellowship with the common object of making that inheritance as rich as possible.~~

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THE PARENTS' REVIEW

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE
FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS.

Vol. XXVI. No. 8.]

[AUGUST, 1915.]

A LIBERAL EDUCATION.

BY CHARLOTTE M. MASON.

(Read by the Chairman, THE HON. MRS. FRANKLIN.)

WE feel that the war must leave us with clearer views as to what is meant by a "liberal education." We are tired of groping in the dark, and those teachers who do the finest work are the least satisfied with the result. They do not find that they turn out many boys and girls capable of "a right judgment in all things," or persons with such resources and interests as should make for a happy life. The schools do marvellous work, but nobody knows better than enthusiastic teachers how much remains undone.

Now ~~I venture to think that~~ a "liberal education," could we give it in Elementary Schools, should afford every child the sound judgment, wide interests, capacity for literary and æsthetic delights, joy in nature, and much else, which make for full and happy living. Men and women must not be insular and ignorant any more. They must be not only patriots but citizens of the world, but the trouble with us is that we are pathetically limited; we do not as a nation see that the concerns of mankind are our concerns also.

Not a bad test of a liberal education is the number of names, proper and common, with which a person associates some intimate knowledge, names which produce a pleasing glow in the mind, such as we feel when we hear "Titian," say, or "Mrs. Nickleby" mentioned. But there must be a good deal of reading round a name before this happens, and teachers are harassed by the sense of much to be done and no time to do it in. Here is a list of some hundred names copied from the papers of one, and freely used by any child of ten or eleven in

46. A paper was before a meeting of London Teachers & other Educationalists (June 1915) to exhibit the working of the Parents' Union School. The examination papers of the Review had been on view.

Form Class II. of the Parents' Union School, in the examination papers which are on view :—

71 — | Africa, Alsace/Lorraine, Antigonous, Abdomen, Antennæ, Aphis, Antwerp, Alder, America, Amsterdam, Austria-Hungary, Ann Boleyn, Antarctic, Atlantic, Battle of the Spurs, the Bourbon, Belgium, Bruges, Brest, Charles of Saxony, Cranmer, Cromwell, Cambrai, Cleomenes, Charleroi, Catholic, Cotton bug, Cricket, Cockroach, Cherry, Cole tit, Willow catkin, China, English Channel, Calais, Clement VII., Dragon fly, Elm, Electricity, France, Francis I., Flushing, Field of the Cloth of Gold, Frederic of Saxony, Grasshopper, Gibraltar, Henry VIII., Hazel, Illyria, Ireland, India, Iron, Japan, Catherine of Aragon, King John, Livingstone, Louis XII., Louvre, Loire, Maximilian, Milan, Martin Luther, Mary of the Netherlands, Megalopolis, Messina, Macedonia, Magna Charta, Magnet, Malta, Metz, Mediterranean, Mary Queen of Scots, North Sea, North West Passage, Neuve Chapelle, Ostend, Pavia, Protestant, Pistillate willow, Poland, Poitiers, Paris, Philopoemen, Poplar, Renaissance, Rotterdam, Rhine, Stanley, Shushu, Scotland, Sparta, Switzerland, Spit-cuckoo, Staminate willow, Treaty of Madrid, Thorax, Ujiji, Wolsey, Wales.

(This list covers the answers to only a few of the examination papers, those dealing with history, geography, and natural history.)

You will probably notice later that children write with as much freedom and ease of Philopoemen, Pizarro, Livingstone, Ypres, as they would use in telling family news to an absent brother. They are able to do this because in every case they know a great deal more than they are asked to tell, ten times as much at least, often, a hundred times, so that the child who has turned out 30 or 40 sheets could, with equal ease, were life long enough, write 300 or 400! You may, perhaps, agree with me that the mass of written matter produced by nearly every child on the work of a term is remarkable, and all the more so, because the children write to the point on an unusually large number of subjects. No doubt admirable examination work is done by the few best boys or girls in every school, but in this case, you have before you the papers of all the families and schools in the P.U.S. excepting those, and there were many, taboo on account of spring ailments. The children enjoy their examination work and never flag; but then, no preparatory cramming is allowed. The quantity of reading set for a term's work, and, what an outsider might call the absurdly wide range of such reading, calls for some comment, and I should like to lay before you a few of the principles upon which we work.

We have not invited this audience to admire what is, I think, a display unique in the history of education, but rather to indicate how any school in London may produce an equally striking exhibit of the term's work done by each child in each class within a few months from the present time.

Some quarter of a century since, I was struggling with what

+ Then too, their knowledge is consecutive, they know a great deal about what goes before what follows the particular point with which a given question deals.

seemed a hopeless problem. I had published a book about education, one consequence of which was that the President of ~~our~~ ^{the P.N.E.U.} Union wrote to me asking: 'But how are we to bring up our children on the principles you lay down with such governesses as are to be had?' ~~(The P.N.E.U. and House of Education were not then born or thought of; and though there were many admirable governesses, there were, also, many who were very ill-fitted for their work).~~ ⁴⁻⁵ At last a happy thought dawned on me,—the children themselves! I had long been persuaded that *children are persons*, that is, that they have just as much intelligence, imagination, judgment, will-power, as have their elders of the same calibre, together with the natural thirst for knowledge that their elders have too often lost; with this thirst for knowledge they have, also, the power of perfect attention that we grown-ups fail in. Here, I perceived, was a splendid provision for education ready made to our hand in the very nature of children. I do not say of "the child mind"; after some intellectual intimacy with thousands of children I should like to say with Betsy Prigg, "I don't believe there's no such ~~a thing~~ ^(person)". In the matter of mind, a child is as much as ever he will be; more, unless we are careful to feed his mind with abundant and various mind-stuff. But, it will be objected, what of deficient children? These prove to be no exceptions; our successes with some of these ^{are} so surprising that ~~some of~~ ^m ~~us~~ ^{we} look forward to the day when there will be no more such children, no more imbeciles, perhaps, ~~no more~~ ^{fewer} insane persons. Of course we are not pioneers in this direction; "Miss Betsy Trotwood" takes the honours, ~~trick for all time~~, and we may live to see, not lunatic asylums, but "Betsy Trotwood Hamlets," where the patients are treated as was "Mr. Dick" and respond as aptly as did he.

The principle for the education of normal and unnormal children is the same; the mind, being purely spiritual, is not directly reached through the senses or the muscles or any bodily channel. Spiritual sustenance for the mind must be at least as abundant and as various as the food administered to the body. Mind-hunger is perhaps the most distressing ailment in our national life; indeed, in the general life, for America, France, and even Germany, are deeply concerned about the symptoms of the complaint. The lassitude of mental inanition is so great that the poor patient (the man in the street) has hardly vigour to swallow the diluted and insipid messes prepared

for him in newspaper headings, cinema theatres, football shows. The cure is food, mental food, and it must be administered in our schools, for, I suppose, nobody takes up any study or interest which has not begun in ~~his~~ childhood; while most of us can point to the moment, far back, when we received our vocation, be it to tight-rope dancing or picture painting.

Having become convinced as to what were the intellectual (and moral) requirements of children, it was not difficult to frame a syllabus which should attempt to meet their needs. The three conditions of success appear to be: First, *quantity*, for the healthy mind is a hearty feeder and flags under a diet of morsels. Second, *quality*, for mind is fastidious and will not touch diluted sloppy food, nor dessicated food of the text-book sort; that is to say, every school-book must be literary in character. Third, *variety*. It was Dr. Arnold who bade us have variety in our reading, whether we read much or little; children, born citizens of the world, are provided with intellectual capacity to deal with a great variety of subjects without confusion or embarrassment and with ever fresh delight. Why should they not be so endowed when all history, literature, travel, nature, art, and ~~much besides~~ fall within their province? ~~Hitherto~~ the schoolroom has been treated as a theatre for mental as well as physical gymnastics; and though these are needful and desirable for both mind and body, they do not in either case take the place of food; certainly, children must depend on their teachers for mathematics, grammar, of whatever language, experimental science; but it is inexcusable to make every lesson an exercise in conundrums, because the natural mind is as able to deal with knowledge as is the healthy body with food.

Realising these few points—the fitness of all children to deal with a wide field of knowledge; the possession of the *power* of perfect attention common to children (though the *habit* may be unformed); the inclination of children towards knowledge in a literary form; the necessity to educate children into persons of sound judgment and wide interests—it was easy to perceive that the proper medium to be used in education must be books, and these, of the best. Bearing in mind our three conditions of quantity, quality and variety, it was possible to arrange a full programme of reading and of disciplinary studies for a term, to be covered under certain regulations; (a), within the hours of morning school, (b), by a single reading of each day's portion of

the set books, (c) with a narration in the child's own words of what he has read. This narration may be written or spoken and may be of the whole or a section of the passage read.

Some of the results of this theory and practice of education are,—that the children work with eagerness and delight and the teacher is relieved of the heart-sickening process of "forcible feeding;" that the teacher is able to give his energies to the disciplinary subjects (Mathematics, Grammar, etc.), and teaches children who are accustomed to attend; that, instead of forcing facts upon his class by way of tedious drawing out, illustration, recapitulation, etc., the teacher becomes ~~its~~ guide, philosopher and friend, a wonderfully stimulating influence through his own natural enjoyment of and interest in, the books his pupils read. The afternoons and evenings are free for handicrafts, vocational work, art-work, etc., to which children bring greater intelligence for the fact that they are acting agents in their own education, not 'passive resisters.'

Now, it may be quite immaterial that children should be able to write 30 (or 300!) sheets summing up a term's work, but what better test is there of an education that really takes hold of them? And, so far as I can discover, there is no ~~other~~ method of teaching practised which affords such tests! The splendid way in which our men have answered to their country's call is reassuring to teachers and shews not only the stuff they are made of but the impulse to noble living and dying which they get at school; on the other hand, the case for 'Rights' v. 'Duties' put up by our intelligent artisans causes us searchings of heart; a liberal education should give a sense of proportion, and I think I may urge that the theory and practice of education ~~would advance~~ ^{we} ~~this best.~~ ^{would effect.}

Circumstances have enabled me to chance upon the few discoveries I have indicated (and some others), and I am happy in such able and enlightened co-operation that we are in a position to put before you some results of our work. ~~There are present to-day, no doubt, members of the P.N.E.U. Committee, of our official staff, of the House of Education, parents whose children are working in the school—all of them co-workers who are willing and most able to explain our methods and answer the queries of any one who is interested.~~

With Eucken (and we may learn from our enemies), we believe that,—“By 'education of the people' it must not for a moment be supposed that we mean a special kind of education.

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We do not refer to a condensed preparation of our spiritual and intellectual possessions, suitable for the needs and interests of the great masses; we are not thinking of a diluted concoction of the real draught of education which we are so kind and condescending as to dispense to the majority. No! . . . there is only one education common to us all." . . . "We can all unite in the construction of a spiritual world over against that of petty human routine. Thus there is, in truth, a possibility of a truly human education, and therefore of a true education of the people." . . . "The task is, through that which we bring to man, to arouse him to self-active life and to base him firmly upon this; it is necessary to make clear to him the sharp *either—or* which is contained in human existence, to call him, through a great reversal of direction, to inner independence, to firmness and joyfulness in his own being," "I do not know of any other way than this which we are bringing before you of affording such a liberal education as the philosopher indicates, (in our elementary schools) ~~We have made experiments in the West Riding, which shews that the children take with avidity to work on these lines; the teachers say it is new life to them, and the quality of the children's work is comparable with that of children already in the P.U.S.; they write and spell well according to their ages, and the vocabulary of works of a literary character presents no difficulty, because the children seem to find that their books are self-explained.~~

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School

It is open to teachers to try experiments; for example, of a child's power of narrating a passage upon a single reading, the passage being taken from a book which is already in reading. But I am afraid I must confess that body and soul, theory and organisation go best together. For this reason we cannot offer our programmes of work except where there is a definite intention of adopting our methods and principles. To do so would be like handing a box of matches to a curious child,—harm might come of it. On the other hand, our organisation for schools is very simple and easy, and the cost is immaterial. I am interested to learn that the question of periodic examinations for the whole of every class in Council schools is under con-^{Secondary}sideration. May I make one or two suggestions founded on experience: such examinations should, I think, be on set books, or bald facts only will be elicited: the books must be somewhat literary in style, or the children will be reduced to

+ for Secondary Schools while for Elementary Schools it is nil.

mere cramming: terminal seem better than yearly examinations, as they afford a record as well as a test of knowledge.

~~I wish it were possible to answer in person the questions that will occur to so intelligent an audience, but my coadjutors who are present will do that better than I.~~

*of the
Pam's
Union*
I should like to add that we have no axe to grind. Our present work is more than sufficient for our organisation, but we feel like those lepers in the Syrian camp, we are enjoying good things for which the whole country would be the better; and we feel this the more strongly because we are confronted with a body of teachers exceedingly well able to do the work we propose to you.

CONFERENCE LESSONS.

CLASS IA.

By M. W. KITCHING.

The class consisted of thirteen small people of about six, looking supremely happy and not a little important. The opening hymn was sung lustily right through by most of them, and I think *all* took some part. After prayer and a few words from Miss Parish, we all filed out and upstairs to our various class-rooms. When I saw the rather big desks in the Art Studio—the room allotted to Class Ia—I felt rather doubtful as to whether the little people would be able to sit still for long together with their feet right off the floor; however, we soon settled down to our first lesson, which was "Number."

Each child had ten letters (we could not use the beans I had brought, as the desks were sloping and I feared disaster!) These letters were arranged as two fives

thus—



and then by putting a pencil across in various ways we made up our ten as $7 + 3$; $8 + 2$; $6 + 4$; etc.

After each division we made little problems,—e.g., "If I had ten pennies and spent seven, how many should I have left?" etc., etc.

At first most of the children were backward in doing this, but before we finished I think nearly every child had at least made an attempt, and some did it very well; one dear little boy of six volunteered several.

THE PARENTS' REVIEW

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE
FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS.

Vol. XVII. No. 9.]

[SEPTEMBER, 1906.]

Introductory.

THE EFFECT OF BIBLE KNOWLEDGE ON A CHILD.

THERE is an unfortunate tendency at the present time to depreciate knowledge, which is indeed the chief instrument of education. Bible knowledge especially is discountenanced for several reasons. The utilitarian asks, "What is the use of teaching a child the more or less fabulous 'history' of the earlier books and the insignificant later records of one of the least among the nations?" While religious parents are inclined to pick and choose and teach only such parts of the Bible as seem to them likely to give the religious impulse. To-day we are confronted with the new difficulties raised by the Higher Criticism. "How far," we ask, "is it safe to offer Bible knowledge to a child when we have by no means come to the end of the critical study of the Bible, and he may, later, hear what we have taught him controverted point by point?" If we could only know how such knowledge affects a child; could we know how the critical acumen, with which clever children are endowed, plays of itself round the sacred text; and could we know what is left of solid possession after childish scepticism has had full play!

Goethe offers us precisely such a test case in *Aus Meinem Leben*. He gives us the minutest details of his own Bible studies, tells us with what temper he came to these studies, and how, by degrees, his Bible knowledge became the most precious of his intellectual possessions. This is how it came about. As a child of about ten, he was already embarrassed by the

possession of several languages which his father expected him to keep up, so he hit on the plan of keeping a family diary, the brothers and sisters writing each in the language of the country where he or she lived. He had some knowledge of Juden-Deutsch and one brother was set to correspond in that tongue.

This brilliant idea, as is the way with ideas, produced after its kind. The boy's synthetic mind found the Juden-Deutsch fragmentary and unsatisfactory. He must needs add Hebrew to his list of languages, and his father succeeded in securing lessons from Dr. Albrecht, the rector of the Gymnasium. This Rector seems to have been a man of original mind, whimsical, satirical, little understood by his townsmen. Naturally, he took to the young genius who came to him to be taught.

The Hebrew lessons went delightfully, no doubt, to both master and pupil, and the impression made upon the latter by the Hebrew scriptures is of singular interest to us to-day, when the question of teaching Old Testament history to children is much agitated. The boy was already able to read the Greek of the New Testament, and appears to have been in the habit of following, in the original, the Epistles and Gospels as they were read in church. Of course, a boy of his power, with both a logical and a scientific turn, ferreted out difficulties enough. "For already the contradictions between tradition and the actual and possible had struck me much, and I had put my tutors in many a corner as to the sun which stood still for Gibeon and the moon which did likewise in the valley of Ajalon; to say nothing of other improbabilities and inconsistencies. All this was now stirred up again, for while I sought to master Hebrew, I worked entirely with the Old Testament, and this studied through, no longer in Luther's translation, but in the interlinear version of Sebastian Schmid, printed under the text, which my father had procured for me. . . . Reading, translation, grammar, copying and repeating words seldom lasted half-an-hour: then I began immediately to attack the meaning of the passage, and although we were working at the first book of Moses, I introduced the discussion of many points which I remembered in the later books. At first the good old man tried to dissuade me from such exertions, but after a time they seemed to entertain him. He continued his tricks of coughing and laughing, and however much he

coughed, as a hint to me that I might compromise him, I persisted, and was even more insistent in setting forth my doubts than in getting them answered. I became ever more lively and bolder, and he only seemed to justify me by his behaviour. I could get nothing out of him, but, now and again, a laugh which shook him, and 'foolish rascal, foolish rascal.'

All the same, his master was not blind to the boy's difficulties and was willing to help him in the best way. He referred him to a great English "Biblework" in his library, which attempted the interpretation of difficult passages in a thoughtful and judicious way. The German divines who translated the book had improved upon it. Various opinions and interpretations were cited, and, finally, a line was taken which preserved the dignity of the Book, made the evident grounds of religion, and gave free play to the human understanding. Now, when the boy brought out his doubts and questions towards the end of a lesson, the master pointed to the Commentary. The pupil took the volume and read while his master turned over Lucian; and sagacious comments were answered only by the master's peculiar laugh. "In the long summer days he let me sit as long as I could read, often alone, and later he let me take one volume after another home with me."

It would be good to know all about that commentary which satisfied so keen a young mind. Anyway, we can commend and imitate the wisdom of Dr. Albrecht. Of all ways of attempting to arrive at truth, perhaps discussion is the most futile, because the disputants are bent upon fortifying their own doubts and by no means upon solving them. The will unconsciously takes a combative attitude, adopts the doubt as a possession, a cause to be fought for; and reason is, as we know, ready with arguments in support of any position the will has taken up. But, give the young sceptic a good book bearing on the questions he has raised, let him digest it at his leisure, without comment or discussion, and, according to his degree of candour and intelligence, he will lay himself open to conviction. The silence and the chuckle of this good professor are worth remembering when we are shocked by the daring announcements of the young sceptics who belong to us. So, too, is the wise passiveness which put a solution of his difficulties in the boy's way, but made no attempt to convince him.

“Man may turn where he will; he may undertake whatever he will; but he will yet return to that road which Nature has laid down for him. So it happened to me in the present case. My efforts with the language, with the contents of the holy Scriptures, resulted in a most lively presentation to my imagination of that beautiful much-sung land, and of the countries which bordered it, as well as of the people and events which have glorified that spot of earth for thousands of years.”

Those timorous, but not unbelieving, parents, who hesitate to make their children familiar with the Old Testament scriptures because of the difficult problems they suggest, or of the lax morality they now and then record, or because of a hundred vexed questions concerning authorship and inspiration, will find this episode in the young Goethe's education very full of interest and instruction. Here was a boy, prone to doubt, quick to criticise, whose eager intellect tore the heart out of whatever subject was presented to him; and who appears, from his own confession, to have made merry over certain scientific difficulties which the Bible narrative offered; but what was the net result? This; that nowhere, so far as I know, does there exist a more valuable defence of Bible teaching than Goethe has drawn up from his boyish reminiscences.

“This little spot was to see the origin and growth of the human race; from there, the first and only news of the primeval history of the world was to reach us; a setting was presented to the imagination, simple and easy to be conceived, and adapted to manifold and wonderful wanderings and settlements. Here, between four named rivers, was chosen out of the whole habitable earth a little, wholly pleasant spot for the youth of man. Here he was to develop his activities, and here meet the fate that was allotted to his posterity—to lose his peace in striving after knowledge. Paradise was closed, men increased and grew more wicked, God, not yet accustomed to the evil deeds of this race, became impatient and annihilated it. Only a few were saved from the overwhelming flood; and hardly had those awful waters gone down, when there, before the eyes of those grateful saved souls, lay the familiar ground of their fatherland. Two rivers of the four, the Euphrates and Tigris, flowed yet

in their beds. ~~The name of the first remains, the second is indicated by its channel.~~ It could not be expected that exact traces of Paradise would remain after such a catastrophe. Now the new human race began for the second time; it found various means of getting food and work, chiefly by collecting great herds of tame beasts and travelling with them in all directions. This manner of life as well as the increase of the families soon made it necessary for the peoples to part. They could not resolve at once to let their relations and friends journey away, not to return, so they hit upon the plan of building a high tower which should, from a distance, show them the way back. But this attempt, like their first endeavour, failed. They were not to be happy and wise, numerous and united. God sent confusion amongst them, the building was stopped, the people were scattered: the world was peopled, but divided. But our gaze is fixed upon, our concern remains with, this region. At last, the founder of a race goes out again from here who is so happy as to stamp a decided character on his posterity, and by this means to unite them for all time, a great nation inseparable through all changes.

"From the Euphrates, not without the divine guidance, Abraham wanders to the west. The desert offers no insurmountable barrier to his journey; he reaches the Jordan, crosses the river, and spreads over the beautiful southern region of Palestine. This land was already in other hands and fairly well populated. Mountains, not too high, but rocky and unfruitful, were cut through by many well-watered, pleasant valleys; towns, encampments, single settlements lay scattered over the plain on the sides of the great valley whose waters flow into Jordan. Though the land was inhabited, built upon, the world was still big enough; and men were not careful as to space nor necessarily active enough to make themselves masters of adjacent country.

"Between their possessions lay great spaces by which grazing herds could easily pass up and down. In such spaces Abraham and his 'brother' Lot encamped, but they could not stay long on these pastures. The very condition of a land whose population fluctuates and whose resources are never in proportion to its needs, brings unexpected famine, and the immigrant suffers with the native whose own supplies he has

lessened by his chance presence. The two Chaldean brothers went to Egypt; and thus the stage is brought before us on which for some thousands of years the most important events of the world took place. From the Tigris to the Euphrates, from the Euphrates to the Nile, we see the earth peopled: and in this spot a man, known and loved of heaven, and already honoured by us, goes up and down with his herds and possessions, and in a short time increases abundantly. The brothers come back; but, compelled by necessity, decide to part. Both indeed journey on to southern Canaan, but while Abraham remains at Hebron near the plain of Mamre, Lot goes to the valley of Siddim, which—if our imagination is bold enough to give the Jordan an underground outlet, so that we should have dry ground where the Dead Sea at present lies—must appear to us as a second Paradise; so much the more so because the inhabitants and surrounding nations, notorious for their wickedness, lead us to the conclusion that life to them was comfortable and merry. Lot lived amongst them, but was not of them. But Hebron and the plain of Mamre appear before us as the important spots where the Lord spoke with Abraham and promised him all the land as far as his eyes could see in four directions.

“From these quiet dwellings, from these shepherd peoples who walk with angels, entertain them as guests and converse with them, we must turn our eyes again to the east and think of the settlement of the neighbouring tribes, which was probably like that of Canaan. Families held together, they united, and the manner of life of the tribe was settled by the locality which they held, or had seized. On the mountains which send down their waters to the Tigris, we find the war-like peoples who already very early foreshadow the brigands and war lords of the future, and who give us in a campaign, stupendous for those times, a foretaste of wars to come. . . . Now the prophecy of unending heirs was renewed, a prophecy ever enlarged in scope. From the water of the Euphrates to the river of Egypt the whole extent of land is promised, but as Abraham has no heir, fulfilment seems doubtful. He is eighty years old and has no son. Sara, with less trust in the gods than her husband, becomes impatient; she desires, according to oriental custom, to have offspring by a maid. But scarcely is Hagar given over to her lord and there is hope of a son,

when division enters the house. The wife treats her own substitute ill, and Hagar flees in order to find a better position with another tribe. By divine guidance she is led back, and Ishmael is born.

"Abraham is now ninety-nine years old; the promise of numerous posterity is again and again repeated, and at last both husband and wife begin to be contemptuous; and yet to Sara comes the hoped-for good, and she brings forth a son, who is called Isaac. The history of the human race rests on a regulated growth. The most important world events must be traced to the domestic life of the family, and therefore the marriage of the father of the race gives us pause for reflection. It is as if the godhead which loves to guide the fate of man wished to set forth as in a picture every aspect of marriage. Abraham having lived so long with a beautiful and much sought after but childless wife, finds himself in his hundredth year the husband of two wives, the father of two sons, and at this point his domestic peace goes. Two wives together, as well as two sons of two mothers in opposition, make matters impossible. The one who is less favoured by law, by descent, by disposition must yield. Abraham must sacrifice any feeling for Hagar and Ishmael; both are forsaken, and Hagar is compelled against her will to set forth again upon the road she had taken in her wilful flight, at first, as it seems, to the destruction of herself and her child; but the angel of the Lord, who had before sent her back, saves her again, in order that Ishmael may become a great people, and that the most improbable of all promises should be more than fulfilled. Two parents far on in years and a single late-born son: surely here, indeed, is cause for domestic peace and earthly happiness! But no. Heaven is preparing for the patriarch the hardest trial yet. But we cannot enter upon this without many previous considerations.

"If a natural, universal religion were to rise and a special revealed religion were to develop from it, these lands, in which our imagination has lingered, the manner of life, the very people themselves, were the most entirely suited for it; any way, we do not find in the whole world anything more favourable.

"If we assume that the natural religion rose earlier in the mind of man, we must grant the clearness of perception

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which belongs to it; for it rests upon the conviction of a universal providence which rules the whole world. A particular religion leads belief to a special providence which the divine Being extends to certain favoured men, families, tribes and peoples. This could hardly be developed from the human spirit. It implies tradition, descent, custom, carried forward from the oldest times. . . . The first men seem closely related, but their divers occupations soon part them. The hunter was the freest of all, and from him the warrior and ruler is developed. Those who wielded the plough and devoted themselves to the soil, built dwellings and barns to hold their possessions, and could think well of themselves, because their circumstances promised permanence and safety. The shepherd at his post seemed to have the most limited and yet boundless possessions. The increase of flocks went on for ever, and the land on which they fed extended its boundaries on all sides. These three callings seem at first to have looked at each other with contempt and suspicion, and because the shepherd was hated by the townsfolk, he kept his distance from them. The hunter disappears from our eyes into the mountains, and only appears again as the brigand. The first fathers belong to the shepherd ranks. Their mode of life in the wide stretches of desert and pasture gave their minds breadth and freedom, the vault of heaven under which they lived, with its stars at night, gave them a sense of awe and dependence and they were more in need than the active, resourceful hunter, or than the secure, careful, home-keeping ploughman, of the unshaken belief that a god went beside man, that he visited them, took their part, guided and saved them.

"One more consideration before we go on with the history. However human, beautiful and cheering the religion of these first fathers appears, there are traces of savagery and cruelty, out of which men rise or into which they may again sink.

"That hatred should be avenged by the blood, by the death of the defeated enemy, is natural; that a peace should be concluded between the rows of the dead is readily imagined; that man should think of confirming a covenant by the slaughter of animals is a natural consequence; also that there is nothing to wonder at in the fact that mankind should try to appease and win over by sacrifices the gods who were

always regarded as taking sides, as their opponents or helpers."

Here follows a very interesting disquisition upon the ideas which men expressed by means of sacrifices to introduce the story of the supreme sacrifice demanded of Abraham, the final test of his faith.

"Without a shudder Abraham blindly sets himself to carry out the command: but, to God, the will is enough. Now Abraham's trials are over, for they cannot be heightened. But Sara dies and this gives opportunity for Abraham, as in a figure, to take possession of the land of Canaan. He must have a grave, and this is the first time he looks round for the possession of land on this earth. A double cave towards the grove of Mamre he may have already sought for. He buys this with the adjoining field, and the legal forms which he observes show how important this possession is for him. It was more so than perhaps even he could imagine, for he, his sons and grandsons were to rest there, and the nearest claim to the whole land as well as the ever-growing inclination of his descendants to settle here was thus founded in the most special way.

"From this time the manifold scenes of domestic life come and go. Abraham still keeps himself isolated from the inhabitants of the land; and even if Ishmael, son of an Egyptian woman, has married a daughter of the people, Isaac must marry with his own kin and one of equal birth.

"Abraham sends his servant to Mesopotamia to his kin whom he had left behind. The wise Eleazar arrives, unrecognised, and in order to take the right bride home, he tests the serviceableness of the girl at the well. He asks for water and, unasked, Rebecca waters also his camels. He makes her a present, he offers for her and she is not refused to him. So he takes her to his master's house and she is betrothed to Isaac. Here also heirs were long expected. Rebecca is only blessed after some years of trial, and the same division which resulted from the two mothers in Abraham's double marriage springs here from *one*. The two boys of opposite characters already strove beneath the mother's heart. They reach the light of day, the elder lusty and strong, the younger delicate and wise; the former his father's darling, the latter his mother's. The strife for precedence, begun already at birth, continues. Esau is calm and indifferent as to the birthright

which fate granted him; but Jacob does not forget that his brother forced him back. Watchful for any opportunity of gaining this longed for advantage he trades with his brother for the birthright and is beforehand in getting his father's blessing. Esau in a rage swears he will kill his brother. Jacob flees in order to try his fortune in the land of his ancestors.

"Now, for the first time in so noble a family, appears a trait which hardly bears dwelling upon, that of gaining by cunning and strategy, the advantages denied by nature and circumstances. It has often been remarked and discussed that the Holy Scriptures do not in any way set forth our first fathers and other men favoured by God as models of virtue. They also are men, various in character, with many deficiencies and failings, but there is one special quality in which men after God's own heart may not be wanting: it is the unshaken belief that God hears and cares for them and theirs.

"A universal, natural religion requires no special belief: for the conviction that a great governing, ordering, ruling personality hides behind nature in order to make it possible for us to comprehend Him—such a conviction forces itself upon everyone; even, indeed, if a man drops the clue which leads him through life, he will be able to pick it up again at any time. Quite otherwise is it with a special religion which tells us that this great Being distinctly interests Himself for one person, one family, one nation, one country. This religion is founded on faith which must be unshaken if it is not to be entirely destroyed. Every doubt of such religion is fatal to it. A man may get back to conviction, but not to faith. This is the reason of the endless trials, the tardy fulfilment of such oft-repeated promises by which the living faith of the patriarchs is brought into evidence.

"Jacob also had his share of this faith and if he does not gain our respect by his strategy and deception, he wins it by his lasting, unbroken love for Rachel, whom he wins for himself, as Eleazar had won Rebecca for his father. In him is the promise of a numerous posterity first fulfilled; he was to see many sons around him, but his heart suffered many pangs on their account and that of their mother.

"Seven years he served for his loved one, without impatience or any hesitation. His stepfather, like him in cunning,

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like minded in thinking the end justified the means, deceives him, serving him just as he had served his brother. Jacob finds a wife whom he does not love in his arms. It is true that in order to pacify him Laban gives him also the one he loved, but on the condition of seven more years of service; then follows disappointment after disappointment. The unloved wife is fruitful, the loved one has no children, and she, like Sara, desires motherhood by a maid; but the first wife grudges her even this advantage and she also gives a maid to her husband; and now the good father of the race is the most persecuted man in the world; four wives, children by three and none by the beloved wife! But she at last is favoured and Joseph comes into the world, a late-born child of sorrowful love. . . . There is strife. Jacob flees with all his possessions and encounters the pursuing Laban, partly by luck, partly by cunning. Now Rachel presents him with another son, but she dies at his birth; the son of sorrow, Benjamin, lives; but the old father is to suffer yet greater pain at the apparent loss of his son Joseph.

"Perhaps someone may ask why I set forth here in such detail this universally known history, so oft repeated and expounded. This answer may serve; that in no other way could I show how, with the distractions of my life and my irregular education, I concentrated my mind and my emotions in quiet action on one point; because I can in no other way account for the peace which enveloped me, however disturbed and strange were all things without. If an ever-active imagination, of which the story of my life may bear witness, led me here and there, if the medley of fable, history, mythology and religion threatened to drive me to distraction, I betook myself again to those morning-lands, I buried myself in the first books of Moses, and there amongst the wide-spreading shepherd people, I found the greatest solitude and the greatest company."

Here we have set forth a full and sufficient reason for giving children a profound acquaintance with the Scriptures. It will be said, that in Goethe's case such an acquaintance did not result in religion. No, he was never religious in the accepted sense of the word; and, at the time when he recites the above confession of faith—the faith acquired in his childhood, and probably little affected by after events—he had paid that momentous

an / visit to Italy, had returned to the classicism of his earliest years, and classic paganism had become so strong in him that he practically ceased to be a believer in God as Christians understood such belief. But religion has two aspects. There is the attitude of the will towards God, which we understand by Christianity; in this sense Goethe was never religious, any more than he was moral in the accepted sense. To set his will right towards the relations of life, whether human or divine, formed no part of his manifold culture. But religion has another aspect: the conception of God which comes from a gradual slow-growing perception of the divine dealings with men. This repose of the soul, this fresh back-ground for the thoughts, Goethe tells us he got from his study of the books of Moses; tells us, too, that he could have got it in no other way (and, indeed, he tried all ways); and in all the error of his wilful life this innermost repose appears never to have left him. "His eyes were tranquil as those of a god," says Heine; and here is revealed the secret of that large tranquillity. Here Goethe unfolds for us a principle of education which those who desire their children to possess the passive as well as the active principle of religion would do well to consider; for it is probably true that the teaching of the New Testament, not duly grounded upon that of the Old, fails to result in such thought of God—wide, all-embracing, all-permeating—as David, for example, gives constant expression to in the Psalms.

Let us have faith to give children such a full and gradual knowledge of Old Testament history that they unconsciously perceive for themselves a panoramic view of the history of mankind—typified by that of the Jewish nation—as it is unfolded in the Bible. And we need not be frightened off this field by the doubts and difficulties that clever children will raise. Let us, as did that good Dr. Albrecht, not try to put down or evade their questions, or pretend to offer them a final answer, but introduce them to some thoughtful commentator (what, we wonder, was that "big English book" to which Dr. Albrecht referred his pupil?) who weighs difficult questions with modesty and scrupulous care. If we do this, difficulties will assume their due measure of importance, that is to say, they will be lost sight of in the gradual unfolding of the great scheme whereby the world was educated.

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